Gay couples unite at Pridefest

Fifty 'licenses to love' issued at symbolic wedding ceremony

By ANDREA BROWN
THE GAZETTE

Fifty couples said "yes" even though the state said "no."

Rings were exchanged, kisses shared and flowers tossed at Sunday morning's symbolic same-sex wedding ceremony at Acacia Park in downtown Colorado Springs. The annual Pridefest activities included a parade, beer garden, vendors and live music.

Some couples dressed in shorts and T-shirts, others in suits and gowns for their walk down the altar in a union not recognized by the state of Colorado. Twenty gay and lesbian couples who requested an official state marriage license Friday were turned down.

Falon Adams, 20, spent a month shopping for her lacy black-and-white wedding dress and spike heels that hurt her feet.

"There's nothing wrong with people being proud of who they love. It's good for Colorado Springs and for our country to be talking about this."

RICHARD SKORMAN –
Colorado Springs vice mayor

"These shoes have got to go," Adams said after trading vows with her partner, June Colvin, 21, clad in a pinstriped zoot suit.

They planned to honeymoon in Las Vegas.

Many couples planned traditional celebrations after the public ceremony that drew hundreds of supporters and spectators, as well as a handful of protesters.

Lynda Pennington threw a barbecue for her daughter, Christina Olivas, 23, and partner Amber Ashman, 21.

"I got them a cake with two little doves on top of it," Pennington said. "She has been with Amber about four years. They've been really happy. That's what marriage is all about."

Olivas' sister, Nicole Thill, snapped pictures.

"Right down to my grandma, we're all supportive," Thill said.

"I'm glad," added Thill's daughter, Cheyenna, 6, before skipping away to

SEE CEREMONY • PAGE 2

DANNY GAWLOWSKI, THE GAZETTE

PREPARING: Falon Adams and June Colvin use a friend's apartment Sunday to get ready for the group marriage ceremony. The couple plans to travel to Las Vegas for their honeymoon.

Wanted:

Pikes Peak Area Crime Stoppers is asking for the public's help finding the following people for whom felony arrest warrants have been issued.

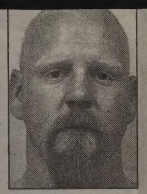
Cecil Ray Bennett, 27, is described as a white man, 6 feet tall, 220 pounds, with brown hair and hazel eyes. Bennett is being sought for unlawful distribution of a schedule II controlled substance.

Robert Brown, 36, is described as a white man, 6 feet 3 inches tall, 230 pounds, with brown hair and blue eyes. Brown is being sought for parole violation.

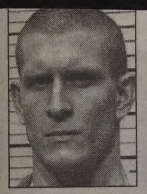
Donald Ray Gilpin, 28, is described as a white man, 5 feet 7 inches tall, 165 pounds, with brown hair and brown eyes. Gilpin is being sought for sexual assault on a child.

Tania Nicole Nathan, 18, is described as a black woman, 5 feet 6 inches tall, 163 pounds, with black hair and brown eyes. Nathan is being sought for burglary.

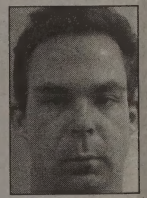
If you have information about these fugitives or a serious crime, call Crime Stop-



BENNETT



BROWN



GILPIN

NATHAN

Springs or **542-STOP** in Pueblo.

You do not have to give your name and you could earn a reward of as much as $1,000 for information given to Crime Stoppers.

A list of featured fugitives wanted in the Pikes Peak region is on the Crime Stoppers Web site: www.crimestop.net.

The people with the following Crime Stoppers numbers need to call as soon as possi-

FROM PAGE 1

Hills, near Quail Lake in southwestern Colorado Springs. Within minutes, they called for backup. It appeared they had a kidnapping.

Reporters flooded the neighborhood, and Bernice Abeyta appeared on television, pleading for her son's return.

"Please help us find him so tomorrow we can cuddle up in bed like we usually do," she said tearfully. "I beg you, please."

Relations between the Abeytas and detectives soon soured, and it became clear detectives suspected the family in the child's disappearance.

When Bernice Abeyta failed two lie-detector tests, the family announced the results to the media, attributing them to her stress and withdrawal from a medication.

They also criticized the police, accusing them of bungling the investigation and focusing too much on them.

Abeyta said when he admitted he wasn't excited about the unplanned pregnancy of Chris-

said this week.

"If Bernice thought I had anything to do with this, let me assure you, she would come at me with everything," he said. "And if I thought she did it, I would too."

●●●

Abductions by strangers are indeed rare, said Carmen Fontanaof the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Of almost 800,000 children reported missing in 2002, only 115 cases were stereotypical kidnappings.

"I truly believe he was taken by a person that may have wanted to raise Christopher as their own," he said.

Weeks after the disappearance, the investigation led police to suspect Christopher was dead, his body dumped in Quail Lake. The city ordered much of the water drained so divers could search the 18-acre lake.

They found nothing, but that didn't allay Morris' suspicion that the lake was the child's final resting place.

The lake, he said, was so choked with weeds and brush

In 1988, psychotherapist Maritza Rentz wanted a baby of her own and kidnapped a 4-week-old infant from Colorado Springs woman Cora Abbott. Rentz passed the child off as her own until acquaintances grew suspicious and she was arrested several days later.

The Abeytas became friendly with Abbott, as well as the mother of Heather Dawn Church, a 13-year-old who disappeared from her Black Forest home in 1991. Heather's skeleton was found in the mountains, and a convict who lived near the Churches eventually was convicted for her murder.

Together, they formed Families of Missing Children International, to aid other families. Abeyta said he often traveled to Mexico to search for missing children, often victims of family abductions.

He estimated they spent close to $1 million on their search, cashing in retirement funds and spending their savings.

"We've just stopped. But we'll never give up."

After the disappearance, the family moved to Pueblo, where Abeyta still lives. He's retired, but said he works on cars, and Bernice works as a manager for a cleaning service in Colorado Springs. She is living in Manitou Springs to care for her aging mother, Abeyta said.

She is doing well, Abeyta said. "I thought she'd never recover."

He said they hold out one last hope — that Christopher is coming of age in a family in which he realizes he doesn't belong.

Perhaps he wonders why he doesn't resemble them or why they don't have his birth certificate, Abeyta said. Perhaps he's asking questions.

So the family maintains a Web site, www.findchristopher.com, and lists a Colorado Springs phone number people can call with tips.

Last summer, they asked the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to age-progress Christopher's

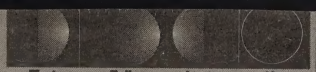
LICENSE TO LOVE

DANNY GAWLOWSKI, THE GAZETTE

TAKING VOWS: Fifty couples take their vows Sunday in front of the Rev. Nori Rose of the Metropolitan Community Church in a symbolic wedding ceremony at Acacia Park as part of the annual Pridefest. Colorado Springs Vice Mayor Richard Skorman spoke in favor of the event: "There's nothing wrong with people being proud of who they love. It's good for Colorado Springs and for our country to be talking about this." **Story, Metro**

At Air Force Academy
Particulates: Good
Carbon monoxide: Good
At Meadowland/Academy Blvd.

Source: El Paso County Department of Health and Environment



	First	Full	Last	New
	July 25	July 31	Aug. 7	Aug. 16

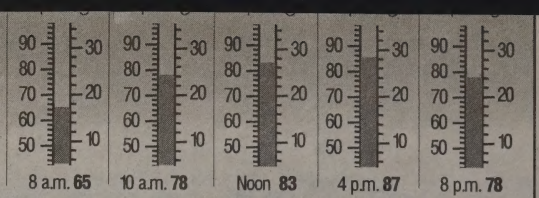
	Today		Tuesday	
	Rises	Sets	Rises	Sets
Sun	5:52 a.m.	8:19 p.m.	5:53 a.m.	8:18 p.m.
Moon	7:45 a.m.	10:08 p.m.	8:48 a.m.	10:34 p.m.

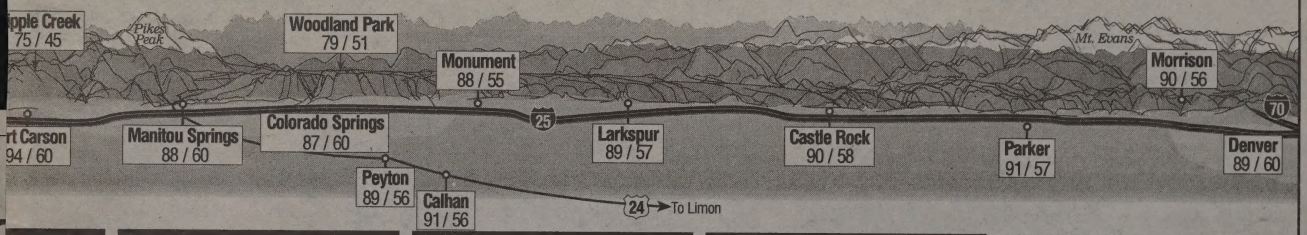
49 in 1992

Fire danger: Low in El Paso County. Low in Teller County.

Reservoir storage: Reservoirs are 63.4% full. Reservoirs are normally 85.2% full this time of the year.

Source: Colorado Springs Utilities





LY 20

udy with a
f p.m.
orms.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21

Partly cloudy with a chance of p.m. thunderstorms.

HIGH LOW
89 / 57

THURSDAY, JULY 22

Partly cloudy and cooler. Chance of afternoon storms.

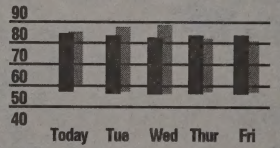
HIGH LOW
83 / 58

FRIDAY, JULY 23

Partly cloudy and mild. Chance of p.m. thunderstorms.

HIGH LOW
81 / 58

5-DAY TRENDS ■ Normal ■ Projected



Normals provided by Western Regional Climate Center www.wrcc.sage.dri.edu

LOCAL EVENTS

PLAN AHEAD

SUNDAY

BOOK SIGNING AND CREAM TEA: 2:30 p.m., Glen Eyrie, 3820 N. 30th St. Donita K. Paul, local author of "Dragonspell," will sign books. Dramatic readings will be given. Cost is $17. Reservations required, 634-0808.

AUG. 3

INROADS/SOUTHERN COLORADO, INC., SIXTH ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET PROGRAM – "MAKING AN IMPACT . . .

Michael and Patricia Olsen. Free, but donations accepted, 636-1255 or www.history.oldcolo.com.

● **SCIENCE FICTION/FANTASY DISCUSSION GROUP:** 6:45 p.m., Penrose Public Library, 20 N. Cascade Ave. Discussion of "Night Sky Mine" by Melissa Scott, 531-6333, ext. 2082.

● **"POWER TOOLS 101: YOU CAN USE A COMBO KIT TO BUILD A BIRD BATH":** 7 p.m., Home Depot, 102 N. Acade-

Today in COLORADO

NOAA weather radio frequency: 162.475 MHz
Current road conditions: (877) 315-7623

City	Hi	Lo	Wx	City	Hi	Lo	Wx	City	Hi	Lo	Wx
Akron	95	64	pc	Fort Collins	90	61	pc	Meeker	85	54	pc
Alamosa	82	48	pc	Fraser	76	43	pc	Montrose	87	60	pc
Aspen	80	50	pc	Glenwood Springs	87	56	pc	Pueblo	96	61	pc
Boulder	91	58	pc	Grand Lake	78	45	pc	Rifle	89	58	pc
Breckenridge	75	44	pc	Grand Junction	93	65	pc	Salida	77	51	pc
Buena Vista	78	53	pc	Greeley	93	59	pc	Springfield	93	65	pc
Burlington	93	65	pc	Gunnison	78	48	pc	Steamboat Spgs	80	52	pc
Cortez	96	61	pc	Hayden	81	55	pc	Sterling	98	63	su
Craig	85	54	pc	La Junta	96	66	pc	Trinidad	90	61	pc
Denver	89	60	pc	Lamar	97	64	pc	Vail	81	48	pc
Durango	87	56	pc	Leadville	74	48	pc	Walsenburg	91	60	pc
Eagle	85	54	pc	Limon	92	56	pc	Wheat Ridge	92	55	pc

Sunday's statewide extremes: 92 at Grand Junction / 38 at Fraser

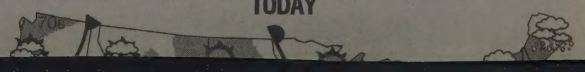
Sunday's high and low in Colorado Springs: 79 / 57

Sunday's precipitation in Colorado Springs: 0.02" / Month 2.19" / Year 12.38"

Normal precipitation in Colorado Springs: Month 1.39" / Year 8.72"

Colorado Springs temperature and precipitation information is collected at the airport. Precipitation amounts may vary greatly across the region. Precipitation after 6 p.m. yesterday is not included in yesterday's totals.

TODAY



CEREMONY: Vendors pitch variety of products at event

FROM PAGE 1

join dozens of people escaping the heat in the park's Uncle Wilber fountain.

Couples received a "License to Love" certificate.

"It may not be legalized, but we're still married," Ashman said.

The law denies same-sex couples the benefits of matrimony.

"What we are missing are the legal protections that go with it," said the Rev. Nori Rost, whose Pikes Peak Metropolitan Community Church issued the certificates.

Valerie Handy came to Pridefest to protest.

"A couple is a man and a woman who can produce children to keep society going," Handy said. "That's the way God meant it to be and that's the way it should be."

The stance was echoed by her son, Damon Slusher, 13.

"It's like my sign says, 'God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve,'" the teen said.

Colorado Springs Vice Mayor Richard Skorman spoke in favor of the event.

"There's nothing wrong with people being proud of who they love," he said. "It's good for Colorado Springs and for our country to be talking about this," he said.

Vendors pitched health products, travel, political agendas and power tools.

"I've been here since 1979, and this is by far the largest crowd," said event emcee Carolyn Cathey. "It is a very important civil rights issue for the community. They have a lot of straight allies."

JERILEE BEN

THE GOOD GUY: John Fisher, shown last week at Pikes Peak Community College's shooting range, leads the college's police training academy. PPCC runs two daytime courses and one nighttime progra aspiring law enforcement officers.

All in a day's — and night's — w

Police academy's diverse students united by their common dream

By JOE BARBER
THE GAZETTE

Forget the B-movie dialogue: Cops are made, not born.

Ace the obstacle driving course, take out the target at the firing range, learn the statutes and lis

many students who opt to take the police academy night course at Pikes Peak Community College.

Beyond that similarity — and the shared dream of being a police offic- er — the variety is wide, as a sam-

the night courses mo

"I discussed it wit were kicking this aro or '97, in fact," he said

"It's kind of like, a over. Which is fun, be